

*My life was full and satisfying.*

I am happily married for thirty-four years to the dentist practice-owner, a pediatric clinical nurse specialist and the mother of adult children. About five years ago, I began working in my husband's office as the practice administrator. My intense desire to do my best and improve everything around me were great assets in my role, until they became my weakness. In the fall of 2021, these

burnout. My emotional bucket was not only empty but had been dumped upside down, and for a time I was at a loss about how to turn it right side up to fill it again.

I began a journey of self-discovery as I re-watched *Dead Leader Running* by Pastor Wayne Codeiro. Somehow I had forgotten to take care of me. I had become a dead leader. Thankfully, I was able to take time to assess the level of my emotional bucket and reflect

#### FIND A QUIET PLACE TO FOCUS & REFLECT

Try deep breathing exercises such as the 4-7-8 breathing method:

- Find a comfortable position, lying or sitting
- Close your eyes
- Place the tip of your tongue gently on the roof of your mouth, just behind teeth #8 and #9
- With your lips slightly opened, gently open your jaw

**MEMBER  
FEATURE**  
PEER-TO-PEER ARTICLE



# 5 *How to Keep Your Bucket Full Steps to Avoid Burnout*

MEMBER ARTICLE | BY DEBBIE JONES, RN MN, MAADOM

personality tendencies, combined with the stress of practice ownership with my husband, self-imposed, unsustainable work hours and all things related to COVID, collided.

I found myself overwhelmed, depressed and beyond exhaustion. I felt hopeless, cried often, and had difficulty concentrating. The simplest of decisions became extremely difficult. Plain and simple, I had classic signs of

on what I could do to change my course. If you want to have a successful career in dentistry, or for that matter in life, I invite you to join me in trying the following exercise.

#### HAVE A WAY TO RECORD YOUR REFLECTIONS

Have available a piece of paper and a pen or open the note app on your phone, tablet or computer.

- Relax the muscles of your jaw and around your eyes
- Breathe in through your nose for the count of four
- Hold for the count of seven
- Exhale through your mouth for a count of eight
- Repeat for four cycles

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## ...BURNOUT CONTINUED

### AFTER DEEP BREATHING, IMAGINE YOURSELF AS A BUCKET WITH A SPIGOT AT THE BOTTOM

Buckets are generally used to contain and transport liquids or other items from one location to another. They usually serve a purpose, such as a bucket of water for mopping the floor. When a bucket is really full the contents spill over. Your life is like a bucket. When you are full, in your abundance, you have the opportunity to spill over and pour into the lives of other.



### MEET THE MEMBER

Debbie Jones, RN MN, MAADOM is the Practice Administrator for her husband Mike Jones' General Dental Practice in Newport Beach, CA. She joined him because they thought it would be a good idea for her to help cover for the Admin Team. Little did she know that her career would transition to full-time dental administration?

Debbie is a lifetime AADOM member and received her AADOM Fellowship, (FAADOM) in 2021. She loves learning and has attended every conference since 2018 when she joined AADOM. Debbie received her AADOM Mastership, (MAADOM) in September 2022.

As you think about your life and role in the dental office, reflect on those things that fill your emotional bucket and those things that drain it. There are no right or wrong answers. We are all made uniquely and there is beauty in our differences.

### WRITE DOWN YOUR BUCKET FILLERS AND BUCKET DRAINERS

Cordeiro suggests asking these three questions:

1. Who am I with?
2. What am I doing?
3. Where am I doing it?

*Bucket Fillers* are people, activities, places and things that fill you up. They are life-giving. How do you get replenished so that you can pour out to others? What fuels you and gives you energy?

*Bucket Drainers* are people, activities, places and things that drain you. They are life-draining and when out-of-balance, can feel like they are sucking the very life out of you. What depletes you and drains your energy?

If using paper and pen, divide your paper down the middle and jot down six to ten bucket fillers on one side and six to ten bucket drainers on the opposite side. The order does not matter.

#### *My Bucket Fillers include:*

- Completing projects efficiently and accurately
- Spending quality (and quantity) time with my husband, family and friends
- Time away from work—traveling
- Riding my bike
- Enjoying great food—cooking

at home or going out to a restaurant

#### *My Bucket Drainers include:*

- Wasting time/inefficiency
- Direct reports who do not follow specific instructions
- Working with others who lack self-control or who are not conscientious
- Poor service and lack of attention to quality and details
- Being in large groups for a long period of time

There may be items that both fill and drain you. That's okay; it's just important to know what they are so that you are able to keep your bucket full.

Being an office manager can be demanding. The busier and more taxing your job, or season, the greater the tendency you may have to cut out the very things that give you life in the name of saving time and energy. However, this is the exact opposite of what you need. It is when the spigot is wide open and the drain is at its peak that you need the flow from the top to be at its highest. You need your bucket to be overflowing with those people, activities and places that fuel you and give you energy. When I have a particularly rough day at the practice, it is really important for me to do something that gives me life and re-energizes me, like riding my bike to the beach. Now that is a bucket filler!

What is one thing that you can do at the end of a long, hard day to fill your bucket?

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...BURNOUT CONTINUED

**EVALUATE THE LEVEL OF YOUR BUCKET REGULARLY**

Take notice of what is filling and draining to you. Periodically ask yourself, "How full is my bucket?" Maybe you need to do this exercise weekly. Do *not* wait until your emotional bucket is empty, like I did. When your bucket becomes empty you have nothing left to pour out. The more aware you are of what fills and drains you the better you can ensure your bucket is filled so that you can care for others in your life.

As office managers you must make sure your emotional bucket is full so you can pour out of your abundance into the lives of others. As we received our pre-boarding flight safety instructions on a recent vacation (a definite bucket filler for me) it occurred to me that just as we are instructed to put on our own oxygen mask first, before assisting anyone else, we need to be filled up ourselves. Is this selfish? No! You can't always jet off on a vacation as much as you would like, but there are small things you can do every day to fill your bucket and

avoid burnout. If you take care of yourself and fill your bucket, you are better prepared to help and care for others. May your bucket always be filled to overflowing so you may pour into those you serve in your dental practice and in your life.

For extra credit, have your spouse or significant other perform this exercise as well. Share your lists with each other. Hold on to each other's lists to meditate over and, if you are a praying person, pray over your spouse's responses. Use these lists to help encourage each other to fill your buckets. ■



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